

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please CANCEL claims 1-28 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the recited subject matter.

Please ADD new claims 29 and 30, as follows. For the Examiner's convenience, all claims currently pending in this application have been reproduced below:

1-28. (Cancelled)

29. (New) An exposure apparatus comprising:

    a reticle stage which holds a reticle;  
    a projection optical system which projects a pattern of the reticle onto a substrate;  
    a reticle surface plate which is a base plate disposed between the reticle and said projection optical system and which supports said reticle stage, said reticle surface plate having an opening for transmitting exposure light; and  
    a sheet glass set on said reticle surface plate so as to separate a space inside the opening of said reticle surface plate from a space above said reticle surface plate.

30. (New) A device manufacturing method comprising the steps of:

    installing, in a semiconductor manufacturing factory, manufacturing apparatuses for performing various processes, including the exposure apparatus defined in claim 29; and  
    manufacturing a semiconductor device by performing a plurality of processes using the manufacturing apparatuses.